

Nayoung Aimee Kwon
(na.kwon@duke.edu)

Empire, Nation, and the Minor Writer:¹
The Conundrum of Representing the Colonized

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Prologue

Imperial-language literature written by colonized writers emerged from the unsavory “contact zones”² of empire between the colony and the metropole, and continues to occupy unstable positions in postcolonial national literary histories. Japanese-language writings by colonial Koreans from the Japanese empire, for example, continue to hover in the margins of national literary discourses in postcolonial Japan and Korea. In Korea, they have been largely dismissed as having been traitorously penned during what postcolonial nationalist histories have retroactively blind-sided and temporally bracketed as the “dark era” (*amhûkki*) when patriotic writers should have broken their pens and remained silent in the face of imperial assimilation and censorship policies. Only recently have these writings emerged into the light for a second look, but these re-readings are still dominated by postcolonial nationalist desires to locate unequivocal

¹ I borrow the concept of the “minor” from Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of “minor literature” in *Kafka: toward a Minor Literature*. In their conceptualization, “minor literature” is a literature written by a minority writer in a major context in the *major* language. It is a literature written from a position of exclusion which gives it a coefficient or level of “deterritorialization,” that is, revolutionary potential. These are powerful terms, but it is necessary to take liberties in “translating” their definition which was formulated from a limited context in order to expand its usefulness to wider spatio-temporal experiences. For the purposes of this project, minor literature is defined as literature by a marginalized writer produced in any major context of uneven power relations in *any* language. In this chapter, I appropriate the term “minor” to help me discuss continuities in the shared plights of “colonized” and “third world” subjectivities in uneven global contexts from the colonial to the postcolonial, although these experiences are by no means interchangeable. See Edward Said about the way “colonized” and “third world” subjectivities have come to be seen as synonymous from the colonial to the postcolonial periods, “Representing the Colonized: Anthropology’s Interlocutors,” 293-316. Although there are other significant points of departure from Deleuze and Guattari as their terms are evoked here, they offer us a shared language, despite their “untranslatability” across vast experiences, a point of departure to begin a dialogue across differences. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), in particular, Chapter 3.

² Mary Louise Pratte, *Imperial Eyes*.

traces of “resistance” and “collaboration” vis-à-vis the nation-state within these texts at the expense of being blind to their more nuanced complexities.

In Japan, such writings lingered in the borderlines of empire from the time of their inception, when imperial policies of infiltration into Asia lured colonial writers into the limelight of the metropolitan center, to the postcolonial aftermath, when the same writers were rigorously evaded as glaring remainders of imperial failure at the empire’s sudden collapse. Critical engagement with these texts emerged slowly, but was predominantly concentrated in the communities and discourses surrounding “Zainichi Chōsen/Kanjokujin bungaku” (resident Korean literature), which were relegated to the shadowy margins of literary discourses of so-called Japanese Literature proper.

In this article, I examine a moment in which the contentious borderlines of Korean and Japanese literary histories converged on a colonial Korean writer and his Japanese-language writings. The “voyage in”³ of the colonial writer Kim Saryang (1914-1950?) and his Japanese-language text, caused deep anxieties for the writer and his critics across the borderlines of empire. The writer and text “in transit” hovered somewhere in-between the metropole and the colony, never belonging unequivocally to either, in the colonial period or in the postcolonial aftermath. I argue that such borderline texts and the writer are burdened by a “conundrum of representation”⁴

³ Edward Said describes the “voyage in” thus: “[It is a] powerful impingement, that is the work of intellectuals from the colonial or peripheral regions who wrote in an imperial language.” *Culture and Imperialism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 243. See Chapter 3: “Resistance and Opposition,” particularly section VI, “Voyage In and the Emergence of Opposition,” 239-261. Said is mindful of the moments of resistance and opposition to imperialism produced from its margins. While my focus is on a wide range of complex affects, not necessarily unequivocally resistant or oppositional, at work in the colonial interaction, I hope to open up a space through the critical encounter in which to read these affects oppositionally to critique imperial logic.

⁴ I hope to evoke multiple significances evoked in the definition of “representation” such as expression, performance, display, equivalence, and reproduction, translated into the context of cultural unevenness. Some definitions of what it means to represent from the Oxford English Dictionary (second edition 1989) offers us a starting point to reconsider its terms in the encounter with the Other: To represent: 1. a. To bring into presence; esp. to present (oneself or another) to or before a person. 2.a. To bring clearly and distinctly before the mind, esp. (to another) by description or (to oneself) by an act of imagination. 4.a. To show, exhibit, or display to the eye; to make visible or

which offers insight into the challenges of “representing the colonized” in the global imperial context. What I mean by the “conundrum of representation” is a play on the common modernist trope of the “crisis of representation” of the modern era, translated and defamiliarized to consider the particular problem of “representing the colonized” in the context of global imperial modernity.

Unlike metropolitan canonical texts, the “representations of the colonized,” from the contexts of their production to consumption across (post)colonial divides, never had the luxury of evading their constitutive imperial landscape, neither on the metatextual nor textual levels. On every level, they painfully embody the ironies and contradictions of empire, and it is this conundrum of representation of the colonized or minor subject, fully embedded in the violent history of imperial encounters, which, as Edward Said has poignantly pointed out, have never been taken seriously as “models or representations of human effort,”⁵ with which my larger project proposes to engage.⁶ My focus here specifically is the anxiety expressed by the writer, the text, and the critic, triggered by the colonized writer’s imperial-language texts and their sense of displacement, to consider the tenacity of the very desire to delineate clear-cut borders in the face of unsavory border-crossings, as well as the on-going and shared logic of inclusion/exclusion at the borders of the empire and nation.

manifest. 7.a. To stand for or in place of (a person or thing); to be the figure or image of (something.) Also, with personal subj., to denote *by* a substitute. 7. c. To be the equivalent of, to correspond to, to replace. 8.a. To take or fill the place of (another) in some respect or for some purpose; to be a substitute in some capacity for (a person or body); to act for (another) by a deputed right. 9.a. To serve as a specimen or example of (a class or kind of thing). 9.c. To act as a representation of (a group).

⁵ Said, “Representing the Colonized: Anthropology’s Interlocutors,” 315.

⁶ See Kwon (UCLA 2007), for a further explication of what I mean by the “conundrum of representation.”

“COLONIZED I-NOVEL”: KIM SARYANG AND THE AKUTAGAWA LITERARY PRIZE

P’yŏngyang Winter 1940. Kim Saryang receives a telegram announcing the nomination of his Japanese-language short story “Into the light” (*Hikari no naka ni*) for the Akutagawa Literary Prize in Japan. He boards the southbound train for the long journey from his home in northern Korea to attend the awards ceremony in Tokyo. The journey signifies Kim’s “debut” into the limelight of the *bundan*, the Japanese literary establishment, and the trip is significantly filled with mixed psycho-somatic anxieties as revealed in Kim’s “Letter to Mother” (Haha e no tegame):

Dear beloved mother. . . On the platform of the train station in P’yŏngyang on that bone-chilling windy February day, how concerned you were over the brewing cold overtaking my body and the journey ahead of mw, as you hurried me onto the morning express, *Nozomi* [Hope]. . . Putting myself on the violently shaking train, my head was filled with many thoughts. When considering the possibility of writing even a little in Tokyo, I felt terrified [*osoroshii ki ga suru no desu*] On the third-class ferry across the Dark Seas, I was suffering a severe fever, and in the train from Shimonoseki, practically comatose. But I said to myself over and over again, from now, I must write what is really true.⁷

Why was Kim feeling terrified at his nomination for the prestigious metropolitan literary award? What might have been behind the pressure he felt to represent the “truth” and his self-perceived failure to do so? How might we read Kim’s infectious colonized body at the threshold of contamination of and by the metropolitan literary field?

⁷ Kim Saryang, “Letter to Mother,” in Kim Saryang Zenshū Henshū Iinkai, ed., *Kim Saryang zenshū*, vol 4. (Kawade shobō shinsha, 1973), 104. “Letter to Mother” was written in Japanese and published in *Bungei shuto* in 1940. It concludes by asking “mother” to have the letter translated in order for her to read it. The gap between Kim’s “mother” tongue and his writing act embodied in this correspondence with “Mother” mediated through translation, as well as the indeterminacy of the line between the private and public (personal and political), are symptomatic of the painful conundrum of the colonized bilingual writer. Kim’s discomfort in his own “(m)other tongue” of Korean is painfully evident in a private letter to a Korean writer about his Korean language story *Nakcho* (Setting sun, 1940-41): “My Japanese is still awkward, and I’m ashamed to admit that my Korean is also awkward. I do not know whether you had a chance to read it, but I’m now suffering over language in my serial *Setting sun* in [the journal] *Chogwang*. If only I could reach a level of writing a good piece in Korean, I could hope for nothing more.” Private correspondence from Kim Saryang to Ch’oe Chŏnghŭi, reprinted in Kim Yŏngsik ed., *Chakko munin 48-in ūi yukp’il sŏhanjip P’ain Kim Tonghwan 100-chunyŏn kinyŏm* [Collected letters of 48 deceased writers compiled on the centennial of P’ain Kim Tonghwan’s birth] (Seoul: Minnyŏn, 2001).

What strikes the reader of this long letter describing the tumultuous journey, overlaid in a montage of memories, is the complex range of mixed emotions revealed, from excitement, tension, to anxiety and even terror. It seems essential to be mindful of the ambivalence of these affects as we attempt to trace the “third-class” colonized subject’s experience of his literary voyage into the metropolitan heart of empire. This was a time of Japanese imperial expansion into China, with the mobilization for war infiltrating the everyday lives of the colonizers and the colonized, in the metropole and in the colonies. In order to harness support in colonial Korea for the war machine, imperial policies were shifting from differentiation and assimilation toward imperialization (*kōminka*, the making of imperial subjects), exemplified by the slogan *Naisen ittai* in colonial Korea.⁸

Not unrelated to this political climate, a new popular trend was stirring in the metropolitan mass media, the “Korea boom” (*Chōsen būmu*), an insatiable consumer obsession with exotica from the colony.⁹ In the literary field, this meant a rise in critical and popular attention to writers from the colonies, either writing in or translated into Japanese. A sudden increase in the appearance of bilingual Korean writers in the *bundan* occurred in tandem with a rapid decline in the literary market for writings in the language of the colonized. Japanese as the imperial language became coded as the homogenizing “national language” (*kokugo*) throughout

⁸ The slogan of *Naisen ittai* was introduced by Governor General Minami Jirō in a gruesome metaphor of hearts, flesh and blood mixing together: “If you hold hands, you will separate again. If you mix water and oil, they will become a mixed substance in form, but that will not do. Form, heart, blood, and flesh must all become one.” Greetings of the Governor General at the Meeting for the Role of the Korean League in National Spiritual Mobilization, 30 May 1939.

⁹ The “Korea Boom” was a part of the larger phenomenon of imperial fetishism of colonial possessions throughout the expanding empire. The link between the rise in consumer attention to Korea and Korea’s new role in the Japanese empire after the China Incident in particular is evident in a colonial diorama extravaganza entitled “Patriotic Korea great expo” [*Aikoku Chōsen daihakurankai*] held at the Takashimaya Department Store at Tokyo’s Nihonbashi from 19 July until 7 August 1938. Newspaper coverage of the event emphasize the urgency for Japanese to take an interest in colonial Korea, which will be displayed in miniature from all aspects ranging from information on Korean food, travel, investment and development opportunities, with friendly guidance by store women employees dressed in colorful Korean dress. See extensive coverage in *Keijō nippō* from 19 July 1938.

the empire, and the Korean language in the absence of the nation was relegated to a peripheral status and was eventually heavily censored, not only from the public, but also in the private spheres in the colony itself.¹⁰

The Akutagawa Literary Prize, the single most prestigious recognition that an aspiring writer could attain in Japan, even today, boasts a pedigree of those who have subsequently become literary giants, and its role in the production of the canon of modern Japanese literature is uncontested. What I want to highlight here is the special role played by writers from Japan's colonies in the foundational moment of the prize, and in turn, in the formation of the boundaries of the canon of modern Japanese literature. The critic Kawamura Minato has already pointed to the significance of the Japanese imperial project in the rise of the Akutagawa Literary Prize. However, in his discussion of the literary prize, Kawamura's concern is limited to the representation of the colonies by "Japanese" writers, distinguished from colonized subjects, and fails to make the crucial link between literary productions by colonized writers and the formation of the modern Japan literary canon, which occurred through their systematic exclusion.¹¹

Established in 1935 by *Bungei shunjū*, one of the foremost literary journals in Japan, the judges were prominent writers and critics of the time, among them Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972), Kume Masao (1891-1952), Satō Haruo (1892-1962), and Yokomitsu Riichi (1898-1947). The award was given biannually, with the finalists invited to the awards ceremony where the

¹⁰ For colonial language policies in Korea see, Im Chongguk, *Ch'inil munhak non*. For a comparative study on the policies throughout the Japanese empire, see Yi Yōngsuk, *'Kokugo' to iu shisō* [The ideology of 'national language'] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1996), especially chapters 11 and 12 for the Korean case specifically.

¹¹ Kawamura's concerns here are limited to "Japanese" writers and with "Japanese literature," never faltering in his assumption of their selfsameness even in the context of the shifting borders of empire. The purpose of my project is to question such assumptions of selfsameness of the nation and its narration both in the metropolitan center and in the colonial peripheries. See Kawamura Minato, *Manshū hōkai: Dai Tōa bungaku to sakkatachi* [The collapse of Manchuria: greater East Asia and its writers] (Tokyo: Bungei shunjū, 1997), 140-150.

winner was announced with great fanfare, and the winning story published in the journal *Bungei shunjū Akutagawa prize special edition*.

The competition in March 1940 seems to have been especially exciting as heard in the comments by Kume Masao, the editor of *Bungei shunjū* and one of the judges: “The Akutagawa Prize finalists this time were of excellent caliber, which have not been paralleled recently and received the praise of the entire judging committee, a rare feat.”¹² The comments of the judges, which were published along with the winning story, reveal that this seems to have caused them quite a conundrum and for reasons more complex than simply the high literary quality of the nominations.¹³

Each of the judges acknowledges how difficult it was to narrow down the final choice between Kim and Samukawa Kōtarō (1908-1977) the winner, and each gives special mention to Kim in the commentary. They explain that the decision finally came down to either giving the award to Kim along with Samukawa or to give him special mention as a finalist. In the end, it is decided to relegate Kim to second place because, according to Kume Masao, “they decided not to award two simultaneous winners.”¹⁴

What is noteworthy in these comments is their common focus on the “timeliness” of the “Korean problem” (*Chōsen mondai*) which they perceived in Kim’s text. Kawabata Yasunari even suggests he would have liked to give the award to Kim precisely “because he was a Korean (*Chōsenjin*).”¹⁵ The fixation on the colonial alterity of the text and writer differentiates them as

¹² *Akutagawashō zenshū* [Collected works of the Akutagawa prize], vol. 2 (Bungei shunjū, 1982-2002), 394.

¹³ These comments can be found in *Bungei shunjū* 18:4 (March 1940): 348-356.

¹⁴ *Bungei shunjū* 18:4 (August 1940): 350. There is no explanation as to why even though two winners were chosen simultaneously in previous competitions.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Other even while the nomination for the Akutagawa Prize suggests their assimilation, revealing the ambivalence of the critics in the face of the colonized text at the doorsteps of the *bundan*. Imperial policies which necessitated the incorporation of colonized writers into the *bundan* also caused deep anxieties in the metropole about how their texts might contaminate the “purity” of modern Japanese literature, which itself was just being formed at the time.

Along with this focus on the ethnic identity of the writer and subject matter of the text, several of the judges make a point of emphasizing their deep “regret” for not choosing Kim in the end. Such apologies are remarkable in their repetitive and collective nature throughout the commentaries, sharing a common language of “exclusion” to describe the final decision. The awards ceremony itself becomes another apologetic enactment of the ambivalent gesture of inclusion and exclusion of the colonized writer by metropolitan critics.

Realizing that he was not the actual winner, Kim takes a peripheral seat in the banquet room, but a grand gesture is made to move his seat to share the limelight with the winner. The master of ceremonies and one of the judges presiding over the event even jokes: “It was at my obstinate insistence to give the award to Samukawa which resulted in the final decision, but looking at Kim sitting next to Samukawa now, I feel a sense that he actually did deserve to get something.”¹⁶

Such apologies appear exaggerated and misplaced since the judges seem to be in agreement in their assessment of the inferior quality of Kim’s text. In fact, the reasons for their nomination of the text, such as Kawabata’s “strong humane feelings of wanting to recommend ‘Into the Light’” precisely because the writer was Korean despite sensing a “lack” or “childish”ness and Takī Kōsaku’s comment that he was “pleasantly surprised” that “such a

¹⁶ Quoted in “Letter to Mother,” *Kim Saryang zenshū*, vol. 4.

talented writer could come out of Korea” are telling.¹⁷ These are double-edged comments, patronizing critiques in the guise of sympathizing with Kim. The act of proffering recognition to the colonized writer despite the obvious “lack” in his work, in fact, allows the metropolitan critics to claim the inherent superiority of modern Japanese literary sensibilities in comparison to the general state of backwardness in the literature of colonial Korea.

Such sweeping judgments on colonial literature, not limited to Korea alone, were commonly heard in the *bundan* at the time. For example, in *Jihenka no bungaku* (Literature in these times of crisis), in a chapter entitled “Colonial Literature: the Emergence of Korean and Manchurian Writers,” another critic, Itagaki Naoko, explicitly refers to Kim Saryang and the Akutagawa Prize as she writes about the Korean Literature Special Edition of the journal *Bungei* which introduces Korean literature in Japanese translation:

I comment on [these texts] here even when they are not very good because I want to expose the current state of Korean literature. . . . They show no depth, new perspectives, or individuality. . . . In this aspect, only Kim Saryang is different. In him, there is something more than a description of reality. Here is a sharp interiority, a modern eye that does not exist in the others. Of all the new writers, he is the most noteworthy and to me personally, of particular interest. . . . In Kim there is a strong fixation on the various particularities of and the fate of the Korean people (*Chōsen minzoku*). His work also has something *je ne sais quoi* which is effective in a dark and wretched sort of way.¹⁸

Itagaki’s comments echo those of the Akutagawa judges in more focused terms, suggesting that for the colonized subject to attain modern subjectivity, it must necessarily be supplemented by that of the collective. Here too Kim is being called to perform the contradictory role of an

¹⁷ *Bungei shunjū*, 350.

¹⁸ *Jihenka no bungaku* [Literature under the crisis] (Daiichi shobō, 1941). Reprinted in *Kindai bungei hyōron sōsho*, vol. 22 (Nihon tosho senta, 1992), 127-128. Itagaki’s “complements” go on to make sweeping generalizations about the lack of development in Manchurian literature as well (which she’s read in Japanese translation). In comparison, she writes, “Kim Saryang’s works are very close to the level of the Japanese. If I were to compare the average in Korean and Manchurian literature, I would say that the former is just one day more “grown up” [*ichinichi dake otona de aru*].” Today, rather than just considering the situation of where Korean literature is at this time, it is necessary to cast a broad perspective at Korean literature and reprimand [*tataku*] its immaturity” (130).

“exceptional representative” among the rest of the inferior writers of Korea. It is significant that such sweeping assumptions on the inferiority of Korean literature in general are based on the critical misrecognition of literature written by Koreans in Japanese or translated into Japanese as representative texts of Korean literature. Such self-proclaimed positions of expertise on the inferior state of Korean literature at large reveal the colonizer’s conceit and utter failure to understand the context in which Korean writers were being called to write so-called “representative” and self-exoticizing texts in the colonizer’s language for the colonizer’s taste and consumption.

How was the writer Kim Saryang perceiving his own position in the midst of all this? We will keep reading from his “Letter to Mother” to assess Kim’s misgivings about the way his text is being read by the Akutagawa Prize judges. Recalling a newspaper advertisement announcing the nomination, he writes:

Below the advertisement of my story was the following critique by the writer Satō Haruo: “A work that is an I-novel which has the tragic fate of an entire people (*minzoku*) squeezed into it.” “Is this right? Is this right?” I asked myself. . . . Even though it is my own work, there is something about “Into the Light” that I couldn’t quite make satisfactory (*sukkiri dekinai mono ga arimashita*). It’s a lie. I’m still telling lies, I told myself even while I was writing it.¹⁹

Here we can link the deep anxiety the writer feels toward the disjuncture between his own writing, which he sees as “lies,” and the pressure to represent the “truth.” This burden of “truth” and the writer’s self-perceived failure to do so is at the heart of the colonial writer’s conundrum of representation. The pressure seems to come from multiple sources, not the least, from an internalized self-critique, as seen here. To try to understand this conundrum of the writer, let’s take a closer look at what seems to have triggered such anxieties, the metropolitan critic Satō Haruo’s characterization of “Into the Light” as an “I-novel” containing the tragic fate of an entire

¹⁹ “Letter to Mother.”

people. Perhaps we can try to approach the significance of this statement by examining the genre of the “I-novel” itself.

In Japanese literary history, the “I-novel” (*watakushi shōsetsu* or *shi-shōsetsu*) is considered *the* quintessential modern Japanese literary form. Written in the first-person point of view and often confessional in nature, it is said to reveal the truth of the writer’s own life. Tomi Suzuki argues that this concept of the “I-novel” as a superior literary form “indigenous” and particular to Japan was constructed by a meta-discourse in opposition to what was seen as the “inferior” and “constructed” nature of the Western novel which was perceived as the mere mediation of reality through fiction.²⁰ The discourse surrounding the “I-novel” developed in a context which necessitated a safeguard against the anxiety of infiltration of Western modern literary influences in Japan.

The loaded ideological implications of the “I-novel” discourse which emerged in the shadows of Western modernity seem to take on added complexity when translated to the colonized text. Satō’s characterization of Kim’s story as an “I-novel with the entire nation squeezed into it” marks the alterity of Kim’s text as what I call a “colonized I-novel.” Satō’s comment suggests that the “I” whose interiority and authenticity are the repositories of modern Japanese subjectivity according to the discourse of the “I-novel,” when translated into the colonized text, is no longer an autonomous modern subject. The “colonized I” must be supplemented by the collective “I” or “we” of the *Gemeinschaft* of the ethnic collective of the colony which it must “represent.” Kim’s text is being lauded for embodying the entire colony into the quintessential Japanese “I-novel.” The “colonized I-novel” is an “I-novel,” but not quite.

²⁰ *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

In fact, the irony of the judges' claim of Kim Saryang into the literary field of Japan through their reading of "Into the Light" as a representation of the collective spirit of the Korean people, surfaces when we take a closer look at the story itself against the grain of metropolitan critical assessments. "Into the Light" is not about the "Korean problem," nor is it about a unified collective Korean people. It is about characters living in the slums of Tokyo, a child of Korean and Japanese intermarriage and a Korean teacher, both of who try to "pass" as Japanese. Elsewhere, I read the "I" of the story, not as a unified symbol of a coherent ethno-national whole, but rather as multiple, fragmented and schizoid.²¹ Each character in the story can be diagnosed as shattered and broken, both psychologically and bodily, suffering a crisis of the wounded self manifest in self-loathing and self-denial. In this reading, the "I" is far from a symbol of a unified collective, which represents a mythical wholeness of the colony, as assumed by Satō and the other judges. If anything, the story may be about the "Japanese problem," the uneven contradictions of empire, that is.

Another aspect of the "I-novel" discourse is the construction of the genre as a quintessentially "pure" *l'art pour l'art* form uncontaminated by political impurity. The "colonized I-novel," however, is not allowed even this semblance of so-called "purity" but is said to be about a collective experience that is always already politicized. For the colonized writer, the personal is always political, and s/he must represent the entire (absent) nation and all the colonized people.

This reading conjures up Fredric Jameson's now oft-cited declaration that "all third world texts are necessarily. . . national allegories. . . where the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the experience

²¹ Kwon, UCLA 2007. (Sorry to be quoting myself so much here, but it is an effort to avoid redundancy and save space.)

of the collectivity itself.”²² There is an uncanny echo of the Akutagawa judges in Jameson’s reading, in which he tries to “praise and valorize positively”²³ the “third world text,” claiming a position of a sympathetic reader, just as the judges of the Akutawaga Prize considered themselves in the face of the colonized text.²⁴

Jameson’s argument has been cogently critiqued by others,²⁵ but I recall it here again because by juxtaposing the parallel logic in critical productions across the East/West and colonial/postcolonial divides, I want to point to the pervasiveness of the myopic predilection of metropolitan critics which is continuously reproduced in various uneven spatial and temporal contexts in the face of the colonized or the “third world” text.²⁶ Metropolitan critics fail to consider the repressive roles of their own privileged positions vis-à-vis these minor texts. If the minor text cannot but be read as a national allegory as the Akutagawa Prize judges and the “first world” critic seem to argue, it is because these texts cannot but be read in this way in the metropolitan critical encounter.

The minor writer is multiply burdened by the weight of cultural representation on the scale of the collective, on the level of production and on the level of reception, in uneven

²² Fredric Jameson, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” *Social Text* 0:15 (Autumn, 1986): 65-88.

²³ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁴ The sympathies of the metropolitan critic may not be what the minor writer wants. As Franz Fanon writes, “[T]he man who adores the Negro is just as ‘sick’ as the man who abominates him” (Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 8) because he assumes a category of radical difference as an object to be loved or hated as he wills and defines.

²⁵ Perhaps most famous is Aijaz Ahmad, “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory,’” in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992).

²⁶ It is necessary to point out here that Deleuze and Guattari, whose concept of “minor literature” informs my project, make the same assumptions when they say that the minor literature is a literature that is necessarily political and of a collective nature. What I do find useful for my purposes here is their exposition of the distinct power dynamics at work in the act of appropriating the major language by a minor writer. In general, Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization is useful as a starting point, offering a common language in which to begin to discuss the particularities of minor literary acts in all their differences and similarities from a multiplicity of contexts. Having said this, it is important to be reminded that these particularities by no means abide by one overarching generic definition.

imperial contexts spanning colonialism to postcolonial transnational global capitalism. By aligning the readings of Jameson and the Akutagawa judges, I hope to show the perspectives of critics in socially produced and self-proclaimed positions of “universality,” which give them their propensity to make sweeping generalizations about the “particularities” of the minor text. The limited assumptions that these readings bring to the texts are symptomatic of the very power imbalance, which has enabled their positions of enunciation as well as the shared anxieties behind such assumptions, which are perpetuated from the colonial to the postcolonial.

“INTO THE LIGHT”: EMPIRE’S FRAGMENTED IDENTITIES

Kim Saryang wrote “Into the Light” in the imperial language for consumption in the metropolitan literary establishment.²⁷ In light of such circumstances of its production and reception, as seen above, it might be tempting to read the story as an emblem of the imperial slogan of harmony in the empire, and the assimilation of Korea into Japan specifically.²⁸ However, a closer examination of the text offers another reading, even one that is in contradistinction to imperial ideology. Such a reading is enabled not necessarily because the text was written as a conscious act of subversion or resistance against empire, as some might argue,²⁹ but for the anxieties and breakdowns that are revealed when it is read against the grain of the violent process of its incorporation into the metropole (and later, the postcolony).

As the Japanese empire was expanding beyond its formal colonies, and as imperial policies fluctuated between differentiation and assimilation, such shifts were reflected in the

²⁷ *Bungei shuto* 7:10 (October 1939): 2-29, citation in text with page numbers in parenthesis.

²⁸ See note 8 above.

²⁹ For a recent reading of Kim Saryang’s text as “resistance” along the binary of collaboration and resistance, see Kim Chaeyong, *Hyōmnyōk kwa chōhang: Ilche mal sahoe wa munhak* [Collaboration and resistance] (Seoul: Somyōng ch’ulp’an, 2004), 11-13, 241-260.

cultural fields. In the literary market of these uncertain climes, colonized writers found themselves under the double bind of the demand to differentiate, through exotic and “authentic” accounts of their colonized homelands, while simultaneously assimilating their writings for imperial consumption, in the Japanese language as a regional niche of Japanese literature. From the perspectives of the metropolitan literary establishment, such transitional times were marked by the infiltration of uncanny Japanese language writings from the colonies which urgently necessitated their cataloguing, naming, and controlling through colonial knowledge. The unfamiliar had to be made familiar, in order to contain what might otherwise destabilize and threaten imperial identities and hierarchies.

Above, I have examined the ambivalence underlying the dual gestures of assimilation and differentiation of metropolitan critical evaluations of Kim’s story in its nomination for the Akutagawa Prize as a “colonized I-novel,” and the bilingual writer’s own complex responses in turn. It is not surprising then that the literary text produced in light of such doubled and conflicting demands would also embody deep anxieties about the colonial encounter. Each character in “Into the Light,” including the narrating I, is marked by bodily and psychic fragmentations which not only evokes questions about the unification of the I and the generic categorization of the story as an “I novel,” but raises doubts about the selfsameness of identity itself.

By reading the textual failure to fit the generic form of the “I-novel” as claimed by the metropolitan critic, and by being mindful of the text’s disconcerting subjectivities (the narrating/narrated and the colonizer/colonized, for example), the text’s multiple breakdowns, on the formal level and in the narrative content, gesture toward the conundrum of (cultural)

representation, and the discontent of assimilation of colonial subjectivities in the uneven context of empire.

AMBIVALENT EPISTOLARY ENCOUNTER BETWEEN TWO COLONIZED WRITERS

Let us turn briefly to an encounter between Kim Saryang and another colonized writer, Long Yingzong (Ryū Eiso, 1911-1999), from Taiwan, which reveals the anxieties of shared predicaments of colonized writers across vast distances of the empire. This virtual meeting (the two never met in person) can be glimpsed through a letter written by Kim in response to Long's critique of "Into the Light" in a letter to Kim.³⁰ Long's letter was written after the publication of his own Japanese language short story "Yoitsuki" (Twilight moon) in the same journal,³¹ and Kim seems eager to reciprocate:

I am grateful to have received your letter this morning. We are born of distant and disparate places, but our circumstances of writing in a language of another place has allowed us to become new friends, and this more than anything else, delights me (210).

This meeting of two colonized writers through the written medium has been enabled by what seems at a glance to be the cosmopolitan fluidity of empire, through their shared imperial language and mutual debut into the Japanese literary field. But as will become evident, the letter shows a deeply ironic response toward opportunities enabled through colonization:

Reading your story "Twilight Moon," I felt it was very close to my own heart. I shudder at the realization that the circumstances of your location and my own are not much different. Of course, that work is not in any way a debunking of the present situation, and in fact, it is written in a matter of fact tone. But in your writing, I sensed your trembling hand. I may just be being presumptuous or sentimental. If so, won't you reprimand me! Reprimand me! (211)

³⁰ Letter in private collection of Long Yingzong, quoted in Shimomura Sakujirō, *Bungaku de yomu Taiwan: shihaisha, gengo, sakkatachi* [Reading Taiwan through literature: dominance, language and writers] (Tahata shoten, 1994), 210-212, hereafter cited with page number in parenthesis.

³¹ *Bungei shuto*, July 1940.

Thus, deeply identifying with a fellow writer from a distant colony, the letter reveals the shared plight of displacement and the desire for solidarity between colonized writers in the expanding empire. The painful writing act is embodied in Kim's evocation of trembling hands and the shudder coursing through his body in recognition of their mirrored circumstances. Kim's anxieties about their uncertain positions as colonized writers in the metropole can also be sensed in his masochistic pleading for reprimanding. In this ambivalent letter entwined in delight and melancholy, it is clear that Kim is moved by the meeting of two souls in their mutual anxiety, more so than the celebration of their success in the metropolitan literary field. It is also significant that despite his recognition of their similarities, Kim does not assume equivalence of their disparate experiences subsumed in terms of his own limited point of view.³²

After asking Long to join him in solidarity, encouraging and supporting one another in their continued literary efforts, Kim turns to Long's critical comments on "Into the Light."

Your critique of "Into the Light" is right of course. I too am eagerly awaiting with all my heart for the day when I may be able to revise it. It is not a piece that I myself like. It was written for the Japanese reader. I know this well. Because I know this all too well, it frightens me (211-2).

Here Kim interestingly admits his own dissatisfaction with and even partially repudiates the story that has brought him so much fame throughout the empire. He regrets that it was written self-consciously for the gaze of the Japanese reader, and this fact troubles him deeply, to the point of filling him with fear.³³ He also suggests that the intended audience and other external

³² Likewise, it is important to keep in mind the shared and unshared predicaments of colonized subjects from different contexts. For analysis of the colonial formations of and postcolonial responses to Taiwanese imperial literature (*kōmin bungaku*), see Leo Ching, *Becoming 'Japanese': Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) and *Ibid.*, " 'Give Me Japan and Nothing Else!': Postcoloniality, Identity, and the Traces of Colonialism," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 99:4 (2000): 763-788.

³³ A similar anxiety can be detected in the afterward to his first short story collection also entitled *Into the Light* in which he describes the circumstances of his writing, "Soon after I wrote 'Into the Light' I became known to the

circumstances may have had a direct effect on his inability to write a story that was fully satisfactory to him. Further, in expressing hope for a day when he would be able to revise the text, Kim's is a melancholic, future-oriented gesture, deeply dissatisfied with the present but forward-looking, toward a time of circumstances different from the one in which he is currently thrown, a time when his writings may one day be able to follow his vision.

The ironies of the colonial situation are brought to the fore in this exchange; traversing spatial and linguistic distances, these two writers encounter one another in a literary exchange of mutual recognition and friendship by the very context of empire which has relegated them as colonized subjects to different rungs on the imperial hierarchy, as the empire was expanding into China.

COLONIAL KOREAN LITERATURE: BECOMING A "REGIONAL (*CHIHŎ*) LITERATURE" OF EMPIRE

By winter 1940, the war is in full swing after the Manchurian Incident of 1931, culminating in the invasion of China by 1937. It is a time of "total war" which was infiltrating all aspects of life both in Japan and its colonies. For the battlefield, men were being mobilized as soldiers and women as the "comfort brigade" and at the home front, women were called to make sacrifices in their daily consumption habits and as "imperial mothers" of their sons and daughters for the "holy war."³⁴ Cultural figures, particularly writers, both in Japan and its colonies, were mobilized as propaganda tools for the war effort.³⁵

world. It was the spring after graduating from university while staying in Keijō [colonial Seoul], in a small *ondol* room, filled with tense agitation, I wrote it in one breath." (Koyama shoten, 1940), 346.

³⁴ On the spiritual fervor that accompanied the war mobilization, see Donald Keene, "Japanese Writers and the Greater East Asia War," *Journal of Asian Studies* 23: 2 (February 1964): 209-225.

³⁵ Kim, 282.

The attention paid to Kim Saryang in the limelight of the *bundan* must be considered in this larger context of empire at war, the censorship of Korean language writings in the colony accompanied by attention to Japanese-language writings by colonial subjects in the metropole. “Korean Literature Special Editions” of major journals and newspapers were cropping up in the metropole, including, for example, *Bungei* (July 1940) and *Chōkan Asahi* (May 1941), and two special Korea issues of *Modan Nippon* (November 1939 and February 1940). In addition, there was an enormous effort to translate Korean language literary texts into Japanese.³⁶ All of this special attention, part and parcel of the aforementioned “Korean boom” called for Korean writers to be ethnic “representatives” or native informants for the consuming passions of the metropole.³⁷ Although a “Korean Literature and Artist Award” was created in 1939 to give recognition to Japanese-language texts by colonial writers, the first significantly going to none other than the “father of modern Korean literature,” Yi Kwangsu, the nomination of a colonized writer for the Akutagawa Prize into the threshold of the metropolitan *bundan*, suggests an entire new level of appropriation.³⁸

The “double-speak” of the judgments of metropolitan critics at the awards ceremony which on the one hand seems benevolent in the inclusion of the colonized text and writer despite a perceived “lack” into a canonical imperial genre, only to relegate it to a niche of ethnic alterity upon arrival, parallels the instability of imperial policies in the colonies between assimilation (*dōka*), differentiation (*ika*) and imperialization (*kōminka*). This *abject* position of colonized minor writers and texts reveals the anxieties in the *bundan* exhibiting both the desire to

³⁶ Kim Saryang himself was an active translator of Korean literature into Japanese at the time.

³⁷ Kim Yunsik, *Hanil kūndae munhak ūi kwallyōn yangsang sillon* [New perspectives on the relationship between Korean and Japanese modern literatures] (Sōul taehakkyo ch’ulp’anbu, 2001), 70.

³⁸ Im Chongguk, 72.

incorporate colonial literature into and the fear of their contamination of the imperial literature of Japan.

In Kristeva's delineation, the abject is rooted in the unconscious and seeps into the psychological and bodily being.³⁹ It is an essential part of the identity and language formation processes in which boundaries are necessary for meaning and order to occur. By demarcating differences, order is created and maintained.⁴⁰

On the societal level, the abject includes "the traitor, the liar, the criminal, the rapist, the killer."⁴¹ On any level, the abject "persists as exclusion,"⁴² as that which does not belong within some imagined or real boundary. However, it is "neither subject nor object" in the sense that it is neither completely subsumed in the self nor external to it. It is not an "other" that can be named and thus controlled. In the social context, the abject is the intolerable, that which must be "expelled," yet stubbornly persists to reveal the fractures of the Law (any unquestioned authority). The Law futilely attempts to cast aside "the irregular, anomalous, or unnatural"⁴³

³⁹ Kristeva's theory of abjection is linked to the Lacanian mirror stage (6-18 months) when a sense of identity is first formulated and language is acquired through the imposition of the symbolic Law (as represented by the Father) which severs the heretofore harmonious world of the child (as represented by the mother). Diverging from Lacan, Kristeva argues that before this primal repression (of the desire to cling to the mother) which ultimately links a sense of loss with language and desire, there occurs a movement of the subject (child) toward rejecting/expelling the mother. Since all this presumably occurs in the unconscious, the abjection of the mother is in effect the abjection of an aspect of the self that is perceived as intolerant by the child. It is an act wrought with ambivalence and conflict since the child must reject that which offers security as well as stifles it.

The abject in relation to the physical body include those spaces/orifices that are construed as neither inside nor out. The bodily fluids and waste that emerge such as milk, blood, urine and feces induce a repulsion because they represent the "breaking down of a world that has erased its borders: fainting away" (Kristeva 4). The corpse is considered the penultimate abject since it crosses the ultimate border between life and death. The elaborate rituals (from food taboos, toilet etiquette to mourning rituals) that keep societies in order reveal the universal revulsion towards such borderline yet necessary aspects of life (Kristeva, 2-4).

⁴⁰ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Boston: Ark Paperbacks, 1966), 94.

⁴¹ Kristeva, 4.

⁴² Kristeva, 17.

through such means as rituals and sacrifices. However, the abject is “above all ambiguity,”⁴⁴ and refuses to be purified.⁴⁵

Kim’s awareness of the unstable ground treaded as a colonial writer in between the *bundan* and the *mundan*, the literary field of the colony, comes through in a critical essay, “*Chōsen bunka tsūshin*” (Correspondence on Korean culture),⁴⁶ in which he directly addresses (the essay itself in fact is a performative act of) this dilemma of the abject position between multiple audiences in the colonial context.⁴⁷ The essay was written in response to imperial censorship policies on Korean language cultural productions and the demand for colonized writers to write in Japanese. Kim carefully delineates why it is essential for Koreans to be allowed to write in Korean, not only for the benefit of Korean culture but also for the sake of Japanese and even for world culture. Here, Kim’s primary motive is to keep Korean language from vanishing, but it is significant that he is also implicitly claiming the mutual debt all cultures have on one another, not simply as one-sided flows of “influence” presumed in chauvinistic cultural comparisons. In order to negotiate the seemingly insatiable demand in the metropole for consuming Korean cultural material, Kim proposes the need for an official translation bureau.

In this sensitive political milieu, Kim calls for a more complex understanding of the shifting cultural field of colonial Korea. The essay is a feat of negotiating multiple and opposing interests: Japanese imperial ideologues who are demanding that Koreans write

⁴³ Douglas, 94.

⁴⁴ Kristeva, 4.

⁴⁵ Kristeva, 17.

⁴⁶ *Kim Saryang zenshū*, vol. 4, 21-34.

⁴⁷ It is worth noting that this criticism is republished in Japanese in the colonial Korean popular journal, *Samch’ōlli*, at a time when the pages of this and other publications were increasingly turning Japanese. An example of a “failed translation,” the article was published in Japanese with only a different title, “The Problem of the Korean Language.” This failed translation in the colonial Korean context, the complex issues of colonial translations merely recast as the problem of the Korean language reveals another failed encounter in the empire.

exclusively in Japanese, Korean nationalists who are steadfastly defensive of the Korean language to the point of accusing as traitors all those who have accepted the imperial call to write in Japanese, and abject bilingual writers such as himself who are caught in-between or, perhaps more accurately, at the forefront of such debates.

Essentially, Korean literature should be written by Korean writers in the Korean language, and this should of course be the foremost priority. But aside from such theories, considering the situation from the practical perspective of writers, when Korean writers write in Japanese, this involves so many obstacles and challenges that it may easily cause a breakdown of their motivation. To be frank about the current situation in the Korean literary field, writers are up to their ears just trying to produce good works in their own language for Korean readers. Their foremost priority at the moment is their passion to make Korean literature flourish, and they just do not have the time to entertain the idea of writing in Japanese. These of course are highly subjective reasons, but perhaps precisely because of this, to demand that they stop writing in Korean because it won't put food on the table and to start writing in Japanese isn't going to be effective (27).

Thus, in response to the call from the metropolitan literary field and to strict imperial censorship, Kim explains the impracticality of requiring Korean writers to write exclusively in Japanese. He describes the plight of those who are able and did make the decision to write in Japanese in such a context:

I believe it is essential to understand the situation of those who are writing or are considering writing in Japanese. Why? Because we must be aware that in order for writers to be writing in Japanese, in order for them to make the tremendous sacrifice, to give up their own language and their audience [in the colony] they should be addressing, there must be a keen psychic motive driving them (29).

Thus, following a discussion about the tremendous burden (even impracticality) of demanding Korean writers to write in Japanese, Kim suggests that for those who did choose to respond to this call, it is essentially a melancholic act, marked by the loss of the mother tongue and the native audience, an act of "tremendous sacrifice." What are these motivations that trigger a writer to give up so much?

The motivation to communicate about Korean culture, lifestyles and sentiments, to a wider audience in Japan, or in another sense, the motivation to spread Korean culture to Japan, to Asia and to the world at large, to have the honor of being a

mediator between cultures, these may be some of the motives. And of course, this more than anything is being called for by these times. And this probably is why the Japanese literary field is calling out to Korean writers (29).

After having established the act of writing in the language of empire as a deeply sacrificial one for the colonized writer, Kim offers some reasons that may have motivated the writer to make such a choice. Throughout the essay, it is clear that the circumstances of empire and colonial encounters make it necessary for some writers who are able to make the sacrifice and play the role of mediator to write in Japanese. Kim does not seem to be idealizing this position of mediator or “native informant” demanded of colonized writers. This is particularly clear when he laments the fact that metropolitan critics completely misunderstood his story “Pegasus” (1940) conflating the author and all bilingual writers of the colony with the story’s protagonist, unable to distinguish between individual colonized subjects. However, despite such misunderstandings, it is essential to continue to make the effort to communicate in the imperial context of unevenness of representations in all realms cultural, political, and economic. It is clear from this essay that this role should be taken by a few (self) chosen writers with the linguistic capabilities and the desires to make such sacrifices, and not to be forced upon all colonized writers. By offering up a few “sacrificial lambs” (including himself), it seems Kim is trying to negotiate the political climate in order to salvage the Korean language from imperial censorship.

Just as it is a sacrificial act, the yoke of producing an “authentic account” of the colony for the metropole (and the world) is an ambivalent act, the burden of multiple gazes with varying demands upon the writer. Even as the writer makes a conscious decision to address the metropolitan audience, the ghostly presence of the colonized to be represented (and the audience in the colony that should have been addressed) haunts the minor writer. Caught between these two often contradictory demands, the colonized minor writer is also under the ambivalent self-scrutiny of his own gaze. This multiple split in the audience refuses a one-to-one

correspondence between the writing subject and his narrative. Caught in the nexus between the internalized native demand to tell the plight of the people and the call of the metropolitan audience for an exotically “authentic” version for imperial consumption, a breakdown occurs between the writing subject and the audience of his address.

This question of audience: for whose gaze is s/he writing lies at the heart of the minor writer’s conundrum of representation. The colonized minor writer is pulled in various opposing directions: the contradictory demands that call for “differentiation” through exoticism and “authentic Koreanness,” while at the same time calling for a “representation” of the collective experience contend with the writer’s own anxieties about answering such calls, mixed with his own personal desire to just produce a good piece of literature. This is a shared and on-going dilemma of minor writers everywhere in any major context, spanning the colonial to the postcolonial periods.

The predicament of the colonized intellectual as a representative of a collective colonized people can be compared to the position of the anthropological native informant as a traitorous translator between cultures.⁴⁸ The question of audience for Kim and other bilingual writers was also entwined with another question: for what purpose were they writing in Japanese? According to Kim’s own self-defense during the post-liberation witch-hunting atmosphere toward bilingual writers, which exemplifies their abject position in this context, Kim seems to have regarded the Japanese language as a “tool,” analogous to “backtracking one step in order to go two-steps forward” in the long run.⁴⁹ Kim says it was necessary for him to continue

⁴⁸ I am using this term as used in ethnology, and I am in agreement with Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak when she appropriates the problematic concept “as a name for threat mark of expulsion from the name of Man,” thus as a site of slippage from within dominant discourses. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 6.

to write even in Japanese in the face of censorship than to burrow away in silence as was then considered the patriotic choice demanded of colonial writers according to postcolonial judgments. For example, both Im Chongguk, the Korean critic who wrote the exposé, *Pro-Japanese Literature*, in post-liberation South Korea, and Kim Talsu, a “second-generation” Zainichi Korean writer active in postwar Japan, say there were only three options for colonial writers: to break their pens and burrow in silent resistance, to resist subversively by writing secretly in Korean, or to succumb to colonial pressures and write in Japanese as “traitors.” An analysis of the problematic binary myopia behind the logic of “resistance versus collaboration” in these hindsight “nationalist” judgments requires more space than allotted here, but what I want to emphasize here is Kim’s own anxiety about his own delicate and dangerous position in between such contending expectations.⁵⁰

When called to defend his Japanese-language writings during the postcolonial aftermath, Kim says that he wanted to write in Japanese to be able to let the world know about the Korean colonial situation, in other words, to become a representative of Korea for a wider audience. He claims as his defense a cosmopolitan desire of an initial hope to go to America via China to write in English to reach a global audience but was forced to opt for Japan in the end.⁵¹ It will take more space than allotted here to tease out the negotiations of the minor writer between the demands and desires of ethno-nationalism and global cosmopolitanism. Further, it is difficult to tease out Kim’s internal desire from the external pressures (*jidai no yōkyū*) that called him to such complex burdens of representations, from the colonial to the postcolonial periods.

⁴⁹ “Munhakcha ūi chagi pip’an chwadamhoe” [Writer’s self-reflection roundtable], *Inmin yesul* 2 (October 1946), 39-48. Im Hwa, a prominent poet and literary critic also considered the Japanese language a “tool.” See “Kotoba no ninshiki” [Consciousness of the word] *Keijō nippō*, 16-20 August 1939.

⁵⁰ Nayoung Aimee Kwon, “Translated Encounters and the Japanese Empire: Colonial Korea and the Literature of Exile,” (Ph.D. diss., UCLA 2007).

⁵¹ An Usik, *Kim Saryang hyōden* [Critical biography of Kim Saryang] (Iwanami shoten, 1972).

The question, of whether and how the master's tools can be used to break down the master's house as in the Hegelian opposition, arises when bilingual writings of colonized subjects which they may have tried to use as tools of critique of the very system which brought them into existence, were vulnerable to being utilized by the colonizers for assimilating and differentiating colonial subjectivities. While Kim may have strived to be the Gramscian organic intellectual, challenging the colonial status quo,⁵² biding his time to turn the Master's tools against hegemonic powers, he was also in danger of being appropriated and utilized by the colonizers as a tool to provide an exotic "self-ethnographic" account for purposes of further control, differentiation, and discrimination. At the same time, Kim was also becoming vulnerable to accusations as a "traitor" to the postcolonial nation.

In the colonial period, the recognition of his Japanese language texts in the metropole, exemplified by the nomination for the Akutagawa Prize, came with the caveat of the impossible call to be an exceptional "representative" of the absent nation. The double-edged comments of the judging committee signify not only the abject position of the individual writer Kim Saryang in the *bundan*, but also of the peripheral place of Korean literature as a provincial literature (*chihō bungaku*) vis-à-vis Japanese metropolitan literature, and in turn, the position of colonial Korea in the Japanese empire. Ironically, in the post-colony, a similar logic of inclusion and exclusion would be enacted after liberation, with Kim being called to defend himself in the call for "representative" patriotic writers in the formation of a postcolonial national literature.

⁵² Gramsci discusses two main types of intellectuals, those whose work sustains the status quo and those that challenge it. In particular, what he calls the "organic intellectuals" work toward counter-cultural production, by new means of collective action toward overcoming the plight of the marginalised and excluded. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 5-14.

Coda

In this article, I examined the borderline location of colonial writer Kim Saryang “in transit” between the literary fields of Korea and Japan, and the “conundrum of representation” vis-à-vis shifting demands and changing readerships along the unstable borderlines of the empire and at its dissolution. I focused on Kim’s nomination for the Akutagawa Prize, perched between assimilation and differentiation which triggered not only the anxieties of the colonized writer but also those of critics from the metropole and the colony as the boundaries between them were in flux. The very anxieties triggered by the borderline position of Kim between Korea and Japan are significant to consider the logic of exclusion, not only during the colonial period but also in its aftermath, when writers like Kim would be called to defend their imperial-language writings at the threshold of a new national literary field emerging in the postcolony.⁵³

The significance of on-going and deep longing to locate a sense of fixed place and selfsame identity, from the scene of production to that of consumption, from the colonial to the postcolonial, offers a window through which to interrogate the ironically shared logic of

⁵³ In post-1945 Japan, it is necessary to examine another wave of minority writers who received the attention of the Akutagawa Literary Prize, particularly from the late 1960s until the 1980s, an era that marked the end of the “postwar” and the rise of the Japanese economy in the new global world order of American neo-imperialism. The historical significance of the rise and fall of “trendy” waves incorporating minor(ity) writers while simultaneously differentiating them vis-a-vis the “timeless” canon of Japanese national literature needs to be carefully examined through (dis)continuities from the colonial to the postcolonial periods. Minority writers who received the Akutagawa Literary Prize include Oshiro Tatsuhiro “Kakuteru pati” [Cocktail party, 1967]; Ri Kaisei “Kinuta o utsu onna” [The woman fulling the wash, 1971]; Higashi Mineo “Okinawa no shōnen” [Boy from Okinawa, 1971], Nakagami Kenji “Misaki” [The cape, 1975], and Yi Yangji, “Yuhi” [Yuhŭi, 1988]. Although Kin Kakue, a Zainichi Korean writer, never received the prize, it is significant to note here that he was nominated as a finalist four times (1973, 1974, 1976, 1978) during this era. Such uncanny repetitions seem to be postcolonial echoes of Kim Saryang’s ambivalent experience during the colonial period.

The consumption of these minor writers in the postwar Japanese cultural field must be examined in tandem with the anxiety of Japanese government policies toward its (internal and external) Asian Others in the context of American dominance in the region. For example, the Normalization Treaty with South Korea in 1965 and subsequent “Repatriation Movements” encouraging the “Return Home” of Koreans to North Korea throughout the decade, and the complexities of the “Return to Japan” movements in American-occupied Okinawa which culminated in Okinawa’s “return to Japan” in 1972, remind us of the political unconscious of the zeitgeist. However, it must be noted that the stories and the writers do much more than “react” to these official narratives of the state and demand more complicated readings on multiple levels, from the personal to the political.

inclusion/exclusion at the borderlines across otherwise seemingly oppositional politics of empire, nation and writer, and the tenacity of lingering legacies of border formations from the colonial to the postcolonial.